

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5239

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CM

SUBJECT: UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND CABINET CHANGES

1. WITH PRESIDENT AHIDJO'S CURRENT FIVE-YEAR MANDATE DUE TO EXPIRE MAY 6, GURC HAS ANNOUNCED APRIL 5 AS DATE FOR NEW ELECTION. AHIDJO ALREADY NOMINATED AS CANDIDATE OF COUNTRY'S ONLY POLITICAL PARTY (UNC). FORMALITY OF OFFICIALLY PUBLISHING "LIST OF CANDIDATES"--DESTINED TO BE AHIDJO ALONE--MUST TAKE PLACE BY MARCH 20. TWO-WEEK ELECTION "CAMPAIGN" SCHEDULED BEGIN MARCH 22. AHIDJO LIKELY SPEAK IN EACH OF COUNTRY'S SEVEN PROVINCIAL CAPITALS, AND HIS MINISTERS AND PARTY LEADERS WILL BE OCCUPIED ADDRESSING RALLIES THROUGHOUT COUNTRY IN EFFORT MOBILIZE MASSES AND GET OUR MASSIVE VOTE.

2. AS ANNOUNCED AT RECENT UNC PARTY CONGRESS, AHIDJO WILL BE ASKING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO AMEND CONSTITUTION TO CREATE POST OF PRIME MINISTER. THIS COULD BE DONE EITHER BY CONVOKING SPECIAL SESSION OF ASSEMBLY TO OBTAIN INSTANT ACTION, OR WAITING FOR REGULAR JUNE BUDGETARY SESSION.

3. CABINET RESHUFFLE IS GENERALLY EXPECTED IN AFTERMATH PRESIDENTIAL REELECTION. PRESENT MINISTERIAL TEAM HAS BEEN IN
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PLACE, WITH ONLY VERY MINOR CHANGES, SINCE MID-1972 WHEN

UNITARY REPUBLIC CAME INTO BEING. AHIDJO MIGHT WELL MAKE OTHER CHANGES AT SAME TIME HE NAMES NEW PRIME MINISTER IN ORDER TO REEMPHASIZE THAT PM IS "JUST ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE", AND TO DEMONSTRATE THAT IT REMAINS AHIDJO'S GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENT RATHER THAN NEWLY NAMED PM IS CHOOSING ALL MINISTERS.

4. WE ARE THUS IN FOR BUSY POLITICAL PERIOD, BUT ALL IN REALM OF THE ROUTINE. MAIN QUESTIONS ARE WHO IS TO BE NAMED PRIME MINISTER, AND WHO WILL END UP WHERE IN NEW CABINET. BUT THESE TOO ARE MATTERS OF LIMITED SIGNIFICANCE SINCE (A) AHIDJO HAS DEFUSED ANY NOTION THAT PRIME MINISTER IS TO BE REGARDED AS EVENTUAL PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSOR, AND (B) MINISTERS ARE NOT RPT NOT LIKELY TO EMERGE AS POWER WIELDERS.

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